

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting

March 25, 2013 -- 6:30 p.m.

City of New Castle's Town Hall

Members Present: David Bird, Chair
Joe DiAngelo
Dorsey Fiske
Jonathan Justice
Susan Marinelli
Josephine Moore
Vera Worthy*

Member Absent: Florence Smith

Also Present: Marian Hull, City Planner

*Ms. Worthy joined the meeting at 7 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Bird at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed and a quorum was declared.

Minutes – The minutes of the 2/25/13 meeting will be addressed at the March meeting.

Report on Parking Study

Dr. Joanne Viola gave a preliminary report on results of the parking survey. The report will be posted on the City website, in the library, and *New Castle Weekly*. Commissioners were asked to review the document and contact her with any questions. More specific information concerning the parking inventory, signage, and recommendations for quick fixes will be provided later. With the recent approval of the City as a National Monument site it is anticipated the Parking Subcommittee will work with those officials on parking-related issues.

Mr. Bird announced the appointment of local business owner Jim Vincent to the Parking Subcommittee. He will contact the City to explore other appointments, possibly from the police department and/or MSC.

Review of a proposal (wharf study) received from Duffield Associates to perform detailed engineering, permitting, and other related tasks for the revitalization plan for the City riverfront including a recommendation to be forwarded to City Council – John Fellows (Sr. Project Manager) and Jeffrey Bross (Sr. Consultant) of Duffield Associates (Duffield) presented. Duffield handled the concept plan for this project (end of existing pier to the end of the plaza at Delaware Street) and this proposal is the second step of the process. Mr. Fellows reviewed the necessary fee proposal, tasks, studies and surveys required to develop a preliminary engineering plan for the waterfront redevelopment plan. Part of this process is to confirm that the earlier concept plan identified the proper location for the dock facility. Funding sources were discussed, but are not part of this study. That document has been completed and once this study is complete those sources can be explored.

Ms. Fiske initially supported this project, but since Superstorm Sandy she believes the City should concentrate on protection of the City's waterfront first. Engineering work performed by Duffield will help in these efforts. Discussion ranged from coastal protection, permitting, FEMA funds being sought for storm-related damages versus how it compares to this proposal, sea level rise, storm surge, and dike remediation. The community does not favor the term "riverfront development" to describe the project. The City bears no cost for the project; it is fully funded by grant monies.

A resident asked for an update of the timeline for the process involved with this project and the fee schedule be posted on the City website, and if there is there any financial commitment at this time to pay for the preliminary engineering study. Mr. Fellows said Duffield would work with the City to update the timeline but they anticipate between 9-12 months to do the studies and obtain necessary permits. City Council must approve the proposal to pay for the engineering study, then it goes to the State level for funding. The Planning Commission decides whether to recommend the proposal to City Council. They would address the issue at their next meeting.

Mr. Bross suggested researching the timeline involved with the Bond Bill money. Typically the monies are used within the fiscal year it is granted. Ms. Hull will research.

A motion was presented by Mr. Justice to recommend the proposal presented by Duffield Associates to City Council. Ms. Fiske seconded the motion.

Mr. D'Angelo voted in favor; he has reviewed the materials on the project and Duffield is reliable.

Ms. Worthy voted in favor citing the same rationale.

Ms. Fiske voted in favor of the motion with the stipulation the information will be useful for protection of the riverfront.

Mr. Justice voted in favor saying there is no cost to the City, it will provide information that will be useful for City Council and citizens to decide how they feel about the proposal, and will generate useful information to be used for protection of the riverfront.

Ms. Moore voted in favor of the motion.

Ms. Marinelli voted in favor of the motion.

Mr. Bird voted in favor saying this is a step in the process to more detailed studies and permitting, then goes to public hearings and approvals, and then funding of construction.

The motion was approved unanimously.

New Castle Way Finding Maps Review – Ms. Linda Ratchford, Project Leader for the New Castle Way Finding Grant Program talked about way finding maps for pedestrians that will include physical maps and brochures. Other reviews will take place involving DelDOT and WILMAPCO. Commissioners were provided a package of information including a summary and maps and discussed the information. The committee was requested to provide a report on comments from DelDOT and WILMAPCO to this body.

“Historic New Castle” Sign Placement – Linda Ratchford reported DelDOT plans on having the signs put up in April. Concerning the truck traffic issue raised at a previous meeting, committee member Andrew Hayes of ForeSite Associates, reported that DelDOT was contacted and their response was that the City look at efforts done on behalf of DelDOT. DelDOT previously made some recommendations for signage and locations. The City was working on an ordinance change and enforcement of same and there were technicalities in the language of the code change that DelDOT would not support. The noted changes in signage pre-dated the current City Public Works Supervisor. Discussion followed. Ms. Hull will follow up with the City Council President, City Engineer, and City Inspector (in the absence of the City Administrator) and try to determine a path forward.

Work Session on Neighborhood Plan – Ms. Hull updated what has been done since the last meeting. Neighborhoods are very small. Recreated maps were distributed prior to this meeting that identifies geographic areas. In April we will work on refining the information and prepare for community workshops.

Budget – No report.

Next Meeting & Adjournment – The next meeting is scheduled for 4/22/13 at 6:30 p.m. There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner
Stenographer